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Chair: Ms. Šćepanović (Vice-Chair) ..... (Montenegro)
later: Ms. Alfeine (Vice-Chair) ..... (Comoros)

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In the absence of Mr. Mac-Donald, Ms. Šćepanović (Montenegro), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (A/67/220, A/67/227 and A/C.3/67/L.2) (*continued*)

(a) Advancement of women (A/67/38, A/67/170, A/67/258 and A/67/2611) (*continued*)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/67/185 and A/67/347) (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Arias** (Peru) said that her delegation wished to reiterate its support for the work of UN-Women, which should continue to support States' efforts to achieve progress in gender equity and the empowerment of women, and to address women's urgent needs, while taking into account the issues affecting middle-income countries. Peru's constitution and legislation were designed to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to combat gender stereotypes. Two of the main policy instruments for achieving equality were the Law on Equal Opportunity for Men and Women and the National Gender Equality Plan for 2012-2017, with both governmental and civil-society mechanisms in place to follow up on Peru's commitments and goals.

2. The elimination of violence against women should be part of a gender equality and women's empowerment indicator for the Millennium Development Goals for the period beyond 2015. It was a national priority for Peru, with legislation and a national programme to combat domestic and sexual violence making provision for various services for women victims of violence, while the National Plan against Violence against Women (2009-2015) was implemented in close collaboration with civil society and the private sector. The crime of femicide had been incorporated into national legislation in December 2011. The resolution to be adopted during the sixty-seventh session should provide input for the text to be adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women in 2013.

3. The international conference "Power: Women as Drivers of Growth and Social Inclusion" was taking place in Peru that same day, and the participants included Ms. Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State of the United States, and Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN-Women. The conference sought to emphasize that women's economic empowerment changed not only their own lives but also those of their families, in addition to contributing to national economic development and greater social inclusion. Her Government had consistently demonstrated its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment at both the national and multilateral levels, and would make a further contribution through Peru's participation in the Executive Board of UN-Women.

4. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) said that, since independence, the Sudan had made significant progress in the advancement of women. Under Sudanese law, women were guaranteed equal pay for equal work and were able to retire at the same age as men. The National Elections Act of 2008 had helped increase women's participation in parliament to 25 per cent and in 2010, the first woman presidential candidate had stood for election. Implementation mechanisms had been established for various policies and strategies to promote women's rights and their economic empowerment, including a twenty-five year strategic plan for 2003-2027 and a national strategy for the family.

5. The national policy for women's empowerment, adopted in 2007, focused on health and environment, education, economic development, political participation and decision-making and peace and conflict resolution. In addition, a number of administrative units had been established to mainstream the gender perspective in all Government ministries and agencies at both the federal and state levels. The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security had undertaken a rural development project for women in all Sudanese states, with a particular focus on the Darfur region. Measures included financing for small entrepreneurial projects, training programmes and awareness-raising campaigns on health, nutrition and women's rights.

6. A national plan to combat gender-based violence had been adopted in 2005, and a unit to combat violence against women and girls had been established within the Ministry of Justice. In addition, the Ministry of the Interior had established a community police unit to protect families and children, and a national strategy to eradicate female genital mutilation had been launched in 2008.

7. Following the outbreak of rebellion in Darfur, the Penal Code had been amended to include provisions concerning crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Consultative Council for Human Rights, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the human rights unit of the former United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), had sought to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women in the Darfur region. Recently signed cooperation agreements with the Government of South Sudan would have a positive impact on women's empowerment and development in the two countries.

8. Recalling that the United Nations had continued to monitor the situation of Palestinian women and other women living under occupation in the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, he said that it was incumbent on the international community to address the outrageous violations of those women's rights and dignity resulting from Israel's occupation of Arab territory.

9. Greater efforts were needed to mitigate the impact of the global economic crisis, climate change and environmental degradation, all of which had prevented States from fulfilling the obligations set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and, as a result, had hampered women's empowerment and development. His delegation therefore reiterated its rejection of economic sanctions and blockades, and called for the cancellation of the debts of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, and the lifting of export restrictions in order to enable them to fulfil their commitment to the advancement of women.

10. **Mr. Motanyane** (Lesotho) said that the eradication of inequalities in education and employment would strengthen women's role in advancing the global agenda of consolidating international peace, economic prosperity and social progress. It was imperative to include women in governance and decision-making, inter alia through quotas that would guarantee gender parity in politics. Lesotho recognized women as equal citizens and was committed to the promotion and protection of their human rights. The Gender Equality in Economic Rights, Training and Outreach Programme, a Millennium Challenge Account project supported by the Government of the United States, was designed to support women's equal rights and their access to economic resources and opportunities. Lesotho was also working with development partners, in accordance with the Lesotho Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals, to promote gender equality. In 2010, Lesotho had been ranked first in Sub-Saharan Africa and eighth in the world for closing the gender gap.

11. As part of its efforts to combat violence against women, the Government had requested support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to establish a one-stop-shop that would conduct a comprehensive study on violence against women, raise public awareness and provide services for victims. In conclusion, he reiterated his Government's commitment to the advancement of women and to the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

12. **Mr. Kasymov** (Kyrgyzstan) said that improving the situation of women and defending and promoting respect for their rights were priorities for his Government. In 2010, Kyrgyzstan had appointed the first woman Head of State in Central Asia, and the current President of the Supreme Court, the General Procurator and the President of the national bank were women. Women also accounted for one third of parliamentarians and headed a number of key ministries and departments, as well as many non-governmental organizations. The women's movement played a significant role in the general process of democratization, including through a successful campaign for election quotas for women, young people and ethnic minorities.

13. His Government supported quality education, access to medical services and decent work for women and girls and sought to expand their political and economic opportunities. Since gaining independence, Kyrgyzstan had ratified a number of international conventions, treaties and agreements to improve the situation of women, thereby taking on international commitments which included periodic reporting to the United Nations treaty bodies.

14. Efforts at the national level included adoption of the Third National Plan of Action for Achieving Gender Equality for the period 2012-2014 and the preparation of the first long-term plan for gender equality, a strategy covering the period through 2020. The strategy established an institutional framework to ensure equal rights and opportunities for citizens,

irrespective of sex, age, social status, health, gender identity and other factors. It included measures to expand women's economic and political opportunities, improve access to justice and promote gender parity in decision-making. Efforts to eradicate gender discrimination and gender violence included amendments to legislation and the preparation of standards for State and municipal services to address gender-based and domestic violence and provide support for victims.

15. Since gaining independence, Kyrgyzstan had pursued liberal economic reforms, which had led to the new challenges of an increase in social inequality, poverty and marginalization of some population groups. The number of labour migrants had increased, many of them women, and they were all at risk of suffering violence, discrimination and exploitation.

16. According to the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/170), two-thirds of trafficking victims assisted by the International Organization for Migration were women and girls, as were 55 per cent of all victims of forced labour and 98 per cent of victims of sexual exploitation. Intergovernmental and expert bodies should continue to develop mechanisms to coordinate national and international efforts to counter trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Particular attention should be given to an awareness-raising campaign, coordination of the work of international organizations, new partnerships of both State and private enterprises and increased participation of all stakeholders.

17. **Ms. Hady** (Yemen) said that her Government, which had been one of the first to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984, and had ratified several other international conventions on women's rights, spared no effort to promote and protect the rights of Yemeni women. The Constitution guaranteed women's rights and many laws had been promulgated to comply with Yemen's international obligations in that regard. Moreover, institutional mechanisms, such as the Supreme Council for Women and the National Commission for Women, had been established to implement the legislative framework, operating alongside the Ministry of Human Rights, which attached great importance to women's rights.

18. Women's issues had been given priority in several national development plans and strategies relating to the advancement of women, economic development and primary education, attesting to the ongoing efforts to promote and protect women's rights. In closing, she drew attention to the violation of the fundamental rights of Arab women living under Israeli occupation, which the international community had a responsibility to bring to an end

19. **Ms. Wilson** (Jamaica) said that, despite the progress made in the 17 years since adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, the World Development Report 2012 had identified a number of areas requiring greater attention, including women's access to economic opportunities and the productivity gap between men and women. The global financial crisis, the food crisis, climate change, war and civil strife had all undermined States' efforts to advance the rights of women and even threatened the progress already made, especially in small island developing States which had been classified as upper-middle-income economies. Those States were at risk of losing funding for their efforts to achieve Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals, and the international community should reconsider the classification method used.

20. Her Government was concerned at the high level of exploitation of and violence against women, and had developed a comprehensive legislative and administrative framework to address trafficking.

21. In addition to accounting for 60 per cent of public sector employees and the majority of professional, senior and technical staff in Jamaica, women held several leading positions, including Chief Justice, Auditor General and Director of Public Prosecutions. Girls graduated from the primary and secondary levels at approximately the same rate as boys and graduated from the tertiary level at a higher rate.

22. The Government aimed to reduce maternal mortality to a rate of 36 per 100,000 live births by 2015. Approximately 90 per cent of pregnant women received quality antenatal care on at least one occasion during pregnancy and almost all births were delivered by skilled professionals. Measures to provide social security for vulnerable women included a programme of cash grants for the most vulnerable families. Women Business Owners Jamaica Limited provided women business owners with business training and networking opportunities. Despite many social challenges, Jamaica was resolutely committed to eliminating gender disparity in all sectors of society.

23. **Ms. Hosking** (South Africa) said that her Government attached high priority to achieving gender equality. Although their access to housing, health care and other services had improved, women still bore a disproportionate burden of the multiple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. The advancement of women's human rights was a central aspect of Government policy, which had five national priorities: job creation; education; health; rural development, food security and land reform; and efforts against crime and corruption.

24. Her Government was strongly committed to achieving the goals and targets set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals, and other international and regional instruments on gender equality and the empowerment of women. There was still much to be done to achieve effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The establishment of UN-Women had provided an impetus for the integration of gender perspectives throughout the United Nations system, which had shown renewed commitment to addressing the challenges associated with women's participation in political, electoral, peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes, particularly in post-conflict settings. South Africa supported the work of UN-Women to integrate a gender perspective in the context of the women, peace and security agenda of the Security Council, including in the recruitment, selection and promotion of women throughout the United Nations system, particularly at senior levels. A gender perspective had been integrated in important areas such as sustainable development, climate change and trade and development.

25. Her Government had established a legislative framework to protect and advance the human rights of women. Women accounted for 44 per cent of parliamentarians, 43 per cent of Cabinet Ministers, and five of the nine provincial premiers. South Africa ranked fifth in the world for the proportion of women among corporate board members. The Gender Equality Bill, which would become law by 2013, would require all organizations, entities and companies to achieve gender parity at leadership and decision-making levels. The Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities would monitor and review the specific measures to be taken. The Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy was designed to empower rural women and provide access to economic opportunity and resources by ensuring that women, including those with disabilities, were the main beneficiaries of land reform. In addition, gender-responsible budgeting had been incorporated at all levels of Government budgeting planning processes.

26. South African women were often financially dependent on male relatives and vulnerable to the dangers of gender-based violence. The National Council Against Gender-Based Violence, launched in August 2012, was chaired by the Deputy President, and the Ministry of Justice planned to establish special courts for sexual offences. South Africa would take action, as a member of the African Union, to promote the empowerment of women on the continent during the African Women's Decade 2010-2020. Her Government would continue its efforts at both the national and international levels to empower women and promote respect for their human rights.

27. **Mr. Kebret** (Ethiopia) said that his Government was working to advance the empowerment of women in all areas. The National Policy on Women was designed to accelerate and ensure gender equality in political, social and economic life and eliminate practices prejudicial to equal treatment. The Government had prepared a National Action Plan on Gender and Development and had incorporated a gender perspective in various national policies and strategies. Women played a crucial role in national efforts to reduce poverty and accelerate economic growth.

28. The Ethiopian Constitution recognized the equal rights of women and men in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres. Efforts had been made to increase the number of women in decision-making and leadership roles, and women had held 22 per cent of parliamentary seats in 2010, compared to 2 per cent in 1995, while the current five-year Growth and Transformation Plan was designed to increase women's share of senior and mid-level decision-making posts to 30 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively.

29. As part of the efforts to eliminate violence against women, the Family Law and the Penal Code had been thoroughly revised to impose severe penalties on perpetrators of rape, abduction, trafficking and female genital mutilation. Ethiopia had established prevention, protection and prosecution strategies as stipulated in the Ouagadougou Action Plan and the

African Union Commission Initiative against Trafficking (AU.COMMIT). Specialized police and prosecution units dealt with human trafficking offences, and a weekly radio programme sought to raise public awareness of the issue.

30. Women had equal economic rights, including with regard to inheritance and land ownership. Banks provided special loans for women's small, micro- and cottage industries, and women were encouraged to organize in associations and cooperatives. In the area of education and health, the Government had implemented successive sectoral programmes since 1997. By 2011, the women's literacy rate had risen to 38 per cent, compared to 29 per cent in 2005, the enrolment rate for girls of primary-school age was 90.2 per cent, compared to 20 per cent in 1993, the maternal mortality rate had declined sharply and the contraceptive prevalence rate had increased to 32 per cent, compared to 4 per cent in 1999. The five-year Growth and Transformation Plan addressed harmful traditional practices, including abduction, early marriage and female genital mutilation, and was also designed to increase women's participation in management and entrepreneurship.

31. The Government, together with sectoral partners, was providing holistic care and treatment for victims of obstetric fistula, including surgical interventions, preventive efforts through community awareness and training for health professionals, research and long-term care. In conclusion, although women continued to be marginalized and vulnerable in many areas, the Government would continue its efforts to ensure their equality and empower them to be effective members of society.

32. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan) said that it was important to focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in the drafting of the development agenda beyond 2015. It was essential to evaluate the progress achieved in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other major instruments, and to identify emerging threats relating to gender issues. The commemorative review to mark the twentieth anniversary of adoption of the Beijing Declaration should focus on evaluating progress and reaffirming the strong political will for further implementation of the Platform for Action. UN-Women should lead and coordinate the work of the United Nations system on gender equality.

33. According to the Social Watch survey, Kazakhstan ranked 33rd of 156 States with regard to the activity index for women. Women were steadily increasing their social and political role and they already occupied almost one quarter of seats in the lower chamber of Parliament. Kazakhstan was working to reduce unemployment among women and to increase their average wage to 80 per cent of men's by 2020. Allowances were provided for economically vulnerable families and for women who had to stop working because of pregnancy or child birth. A programme to promote female entrepreneurship had been launched for the period 2009-2014.

34. Stronger legislation to prevent domestic violence and punish perpetrators was urgently needed, together with victim support services. Legislation on equal rights and opportunities and on the prevention of domestic violence were consistent with international standards. A multi-pronged gender strategy addressed gender-related issues and provided women with comprehensive information as well as access to their legal rights. The Government reviewed and resolved individual complaints from women facing violence and discrimination, while 21 crisis shelter centres were available to offer immediate assistance.

35. The goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women was integral to all three pillars of work of the United Nations: development, peace and security, and human rights. Gender equality was an essential condition for sustainable economic and social development and consequently for the promotion of peace, security and stability in the world. Kazakhstan remained committed to promoting gender equality and the advancement of women in its foreign and domestic policies.

36. **Mr.** Ananth **Kumar** (India) said that women in India had had full and equal voting rights since 1950 and that the principle of gender equality was firmly enshrined in the Constitution. His Government aimed to create an environment in which women could realize their full potential, enjoy all of their human rights and have equal participation in decision-making and in social, political and economic life. The percentage of positions in rural and urban local governance bodies reserved for women had been increased to 50 per cent in 2009, resulting in the election of over 1 million women.

37. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women coordinated development programmes across several ministries, with the National Resource Centre for Women as the focal point. India's Eleventh Five Year Plan had gender as a cross-cutting theme, with targeted measures for gender equality and empowerment. A joint parliamentary committee ensured that legislation was gender sensitive and the Gender Budget Statement reflected budgetary allocations for women's programmes. Those measures had resulted in significantly lower maternal and infant mortality rates, narrower gender gaps in wages, and almost universal primary-school enrolment, as well as reduced gender gaps in secondary and higher education.

38. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme provided poor rural households with 100 days of employment per year, with fifty percent reserved for women. Successful provincial programmes included an education programme for girls; social and economic security schemes; health care initiatives; and a programme to strengthen women's self-help groups. Overall, women accounted for four fifths of the members of such groups, which were an important vehicle for economic empowerment.

39. Special measures and programmes were implemented for disadvantaged groups, including women in extreme poverty and women affected by natural disasters. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act contained provisions for shelter placement, medical assistance, compensation, maintenance orders and temporary custody of children for women victims of domestic violence. Comprehensive legislation and policies addressed the problem of trafficking in women and girls and the parliament was currently considering a draft bill on a safe working environment for women. The media were encouraged to develop self-regulatory mechanisms to portray messages consistent with the human dignity of women and girls.

40. His Government reaffirmed its international obligations arising from, inter alia, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Conference on Population and Development. India supported international, regional and subregional cooperation to promote women's empowerment and was fully committed to advancing that goal globally through the United Nations, in particular UN-Women.

41. **Ms. Morgan-Moss** (Panama) said that her country's National Assembly was in the process of incorporating the offence of femicide into current legislation and establishing specialized prosecution units for such crimes, as well as comprehensive services for the victims. Three pieces of draft legislation were under consideration: one on domestic violence and abuse of children and adolescents; another to add an article on femicide to the Penal Code; and a third amending the Penal Code to incorporate femicide and establish penalties for violence against women.

42. The Public Policy on Equality of Opportunities for Women focused on various areas, including violence against women, human rights and equality before the law, indigenous, rural and Afro-descendent populations and health. The National Plan to Combat Domestic Violence and Promote Civil Harmony covered the period 2004 to 2014. The National Institute of Women and the National Statistics and Census Institute had launched a network of public and civil-society entities to incorporate the gender dimension in national statistics. Local governments, civil society and community organizations participated in local networks to prevent and address domestic violence, while gender offices in government agencies promoted equal opportunities for women. A network of social communicators was working to eliminate discriminatory practices and violent and sexist language, and complaints could be filed with the Citizens' Help Centre.

43. Spain was supporting a comprehensive programme in Panama to assist victims of gender-based violence, and the Inter-American Commission on Women, together with the National Women's Institute, was supporting a study of policies and programmes on HIV and violence against women. In 2012, her Government had appointed the National Commission against Trafficking in Persons and designated September as the month for awareness-raising.

44. The Government was making every effort to comply with its commitments. Both the State and civil society had the political will and the resources to ensure implementation and follow-up, and understood that women's economic empowerment contributed to

preventing violence and improving the quality of life for women and girls.

45. **Ms. Chikava** (Zimbabwe) said that her Government had signed and ratified a number of regional and international instruments on gender equality and the empowerment of women and had incorporated their provisions into domestic legislation and policies, including the National Gender Policy Implementation Strategy and Work Plan for 2008-2012. The Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development coordinated all gender programmes and facilitated gender mainstreaming in the ministries.

46. The Government had made considerable progress in implementing the provisions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development and its efforts to address the gaps in gender representation in governance and political institutions included the promotion of proportional representation. The adoption of a quota system by political parties had also increased women's representation.

47. The Domestic Violence Act, inter alia, had contributed to eliminating violence against women, but further efforts were needed, including campaigns targeted at a male audience. In addition to affirmative action programmes, the Government had launched the Broad Based Women's Economic Empowerment Framework, a medium-term development plan for integrating women into all economic sectors in accordance with the Indigenization and Empowerment Act and regional and international gender mainstreaming instruments.

48. Zimbabwe had been one of the first five African States that introduced a gender-responsive economic policy management initiative to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender issues in economic development policy. Great strides had also been made in terms of education, and her Government commended UN-Women, UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for their programmes to empower women. The National Women's Council Bill would establish a coordinated framework to advance women's issues.

49. Despite the progress described, Zimbabwe still faced multiple hurdles, including limited access to credit for rural women. The Government would step up its efforts to empower women and ensure gender equality, so that the women of Zimbabwe, who deserved no less than parity with men, could contribute to the country's economic growth and development.

50. *Ms. Alfeine (Comoros), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

51. **Ms. Liusa** (Maldives) said that the Maldives was proud of its achievements for the advancement of women and gender equality, which included high literacy rates for girls and near-universal access to basic health care for women. The newly established Ministry of Gender, Family and Human Rights was guided by the National Gender Equality Policy in its efforts against gender discrimination. The Maldives was currently in the process of submitting its combined fourth and fifth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

52. According to a 2007 study, one in three women in the Maldives suffered some form of abuse during their lifetime. The 2012 Domestic Violence Act had established a Family Protection Authority, as well as providing for protection and safeguards for victims and rehabilitation of offenders. Special family units investigated all cases of abuse in the home and a shelter for women and girl victims was planned.

53. As persistent gender inequalities hindered women's full participation in society, the Decentralization Act provided for a women's development committee in each island to uphold women's rights and increase their participation in political and social life. The Small and Medium Enterprise Programme earmarked a certain percentage of financial, technical and capacity-building assistance funds for women. Gender stereotypes and socioeconomic changes reinforced a segregation of men's and women's work and increased inequalities. Most women were engaged in unpaid household work and cultural expectations limited their access to higher education and employment, while conservative views of women's rights according to Islam were a further challenge.

54. Her Government supported the Secretary-General's recommendations for a systematic approach involving multiple stakeholders and for accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in order to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The

Maldives reaffirmed its commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of women through its current membership of the Human Rights Council and its future membership of the Executive Board of UN-Women.

55. **Ms. Al-Amri** (Qatar) said that her Government wished to reaffirm its commitment to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in a manner consistent with sharia and with Qatari social values. The strengthening of women's rights was linked to the consolidation of the rights and duties of the family, which, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was the natural and fundamental group unit of society.

56. Women's political, social and economic rights, including the principle of equality of rights and duties, were set out in the Constitution of Qatar and in legislation. Qatar had ratified many international and regional conventions and instruments that strengthened women's rights, and the Government had made great efforts to modernize women's education and to facilitate women's participation in the labour market. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women were two of the institutions that sough to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

57. In August 2010, the Government had issued the third of a series of reports assessing the country's progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. That report had shown that Qatar had succeeded in achieving the goals of eradicating poverty and hunger, providing education for all, lowering infant mortality and reducing rates of HIV and malaria infection. In keeping with its efforts to foster and protect women's rights and ensure their empowerment in all fields, as well as its emphasis on the importance of continued dialogue and cooperation with a view to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, Qatar had hosted the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Advancement of Women in Doha in 2012. The Ministerial Meeting had provided a forum for sharing expertise and experience in addressing the challenges facing women around the world and proposing appropriate solutions. All members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had confirmed their commitment to the advancement of women and the promotion of women's participation in all areas of life, focusing on the importance of the advancement of women as a pillar of development.

58. Women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan continued to suffer violations of their rights under the Israeli occupation, which deprived them of their basic rights to education, health care, security and freedom of movement, and had a major negative impact on all aspects of life.

59. It would be possible to achieve a world free of all forms of violence against women if joint efforts were made to raise awareness and encourage an outlook that repudiated violence against women among all groups in society, and if harsher penalties were imposed on the perpetrators of such violence. In conclusion, she emphasized the importance of providing less-developed countries with the support they needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Qatar was determined to pursue women's political, economic and social empowerment, so that they could play a fundamental and effective role in the establishment of peace and the fostering of development.

60. **Ms. Kabua** (Marshall Islands) said that Marshallese society had a matrilineal system of traditional land tenure, yet women still faced severe challenges, including high rates of domestic violence, limited access to education and a lack of professional and business opportunities. The participants in the forty-third meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum, held in August 2012, had endorsed the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration and had committed to supporting women's political representation, eliminating barriers to participation in the economic sphere and taking action to end violence against women. The Joint Statement by the leaders of the Pacific Island Forum and the Secretary-General, issued in September 2012, had highlighted measures to support the economic and political empowerment of women and to counter gender-based violence.

61. Action by the Marshallese Government to support women's advancement included the successful passage in September 2011 of a national domestic violence law, while access to quality education had been improved as part of efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Government was also addressing violence against women by boosting law enforcement and legal protection, networking and community awareness and protection services for women and children. Leadership training and other educational opportunities

were increasing women's economic and political participation. Efforts to address gender and climate change focused on mainstreaming awareness and consultation into national and local adaptation and energy strategies and sustainable land development. The Marshallese Government was demonstrating strong political will to overcome the challenges and to transform the written words of declarations and resolution into visible reality.

62. **Ms. Gunnarsdóttir** (Iceland) said that her delegation called on all States that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to withdraw immediately any reservations incompatible with its purposes and objectives. It was also important to speed up implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The United Nations should promote gender equality and women's empowerment more effectively in all its processes, particularly those culminating in 2015. Priority should be given to integrating a gender perspective in the preparation of the development agenda beyond 2015, which would include the General Assembly special event in 2013 to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. There should be zero tolerance of any failure to comply with the commitments made.

63. In the context of efforts to combat violence against women, a task force of government and civil society representatives was advising the Government on implementation of the national action plan to combat human trafficking. Legislation to criminalize the act of buying individuals for the purposes of prostitution had been introduced, and the penalties for sex trafficking had been brought into line with penalties for other serious crimes. The National Police College was training its students to investigate human trafficking, and police guidelines for victim identification had been issued.

64. Obstetric fistula was one of the clearest examples of health inequity in the world, as it had been eliminated in industrialized countries, but continued to be a major cause of maternal mortality in developing countries. Her Government encouraged Member States to support the campaign to end fistula, which had already demonstrated tangible results. Iceland also supported the African countries' initiative to intensify global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation. Iceland also supported the joint programme of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNFPA on female genital mutilation in 2011. Finally, she commended Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan for her courageous fight for the right of girls to education.

65. **Mr.** Abdul **Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his Government was committed to the advancement of women through political and economic empowerment. Education for girls was free as far as the higher secondary level, at which point they received special stipends. Gender parity, a target of the Millennium Development Goals, had been achieved at the primary and secondary levels. The National Policy on Women's Development had been revised to meet current needs. Women held ten per cent of all civil service jobs and were in high positions in government, the judiciary, administrative, diplomatic and law enforcement services and the armed forces. Rural women were granted collateral-free micro-credit and women entrepreneurs received 10 per cent of the Small Enterprise Fund and 10 per cent of industrial plots. Three million women worked in the readymade garment sector and many sent remittances from abroad.

66. Various laws had been enacted to stop violence against women, and one-stop crisis centres provided treatment and services for victims. Other measures included the establishment of DNA profiling and screening labs at some national hospitals, the assignment of women police officers to victim support centres, training for judges and law enforcement agencies and awareness-raising programmes and advocacy focused on men and boys. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the international community, development partners and United Nations agencies would provide both technical and financial support to improve the situation of women in the developing world.

67. **Mr. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that Sri Lanka's Constitution guaranteed equal rights without discrimination and provided for affirmative action to ensure full equality. The Women's Charter adopted in 1993 was the cornerstone of all policy decisions concerning women and was designed to achieve the goals of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Sri Lanka was a party. His Government's impressive achievements over the years in women's education, health and economic empowerment included

legislation to address the issue of violence against women and engagement with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to identify areas of concern and set clear targets for its national plan of action for women.

68. In the post-conflict scenario, it was important to address women's economic empowerment needs and to prevent exploitation and abuse of women. Recent engagement with civil society representatives had drawn attention to several issues and allegations which should first be addressed by the police and other organizations. The Government would then investigate and take action. Local police stations, especially those in the former conflict-affected areas, had expanded their women's and children's units. Female-headed households was another post-conflict.

69. The Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs was working with UNDP and UNFPA on issues relating to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Guidelines to protect the rights of women and children specified that any child or woman arrested or detained could be accompanied by a person of their choice to the place of questioning and should be placed in the custody of a woman military or police officer. A rehabilitation programme for former combatants had provided education and training to over 2,000 women.

70. His delegation appreciated the consolidation of the four United Nations gender entities into UN-Women, which had strengthened work on gender equality and women's empowerment. His Government was considering legislation to create a National Commission on Women to coordinate and implement national plans and policies and serve as the focal point for activities concerning women's rights, empowerment and development. He was confident that his country would move forward to harness the talents of all its people, especially women, in building the new Sri Lanka.

71. **Mr. von Haff** (Angola) said that gender equality had always been a priority for his Government. The Constitution established equality between men and women in the socioeconomic, cultural and political spheres, and policies and programmes were in place to ensure women's welfare and their full and equal participation in decision-making processes. Since the General Election in August 2012, over 35 per cent of parliamentarians and 8 heads of ministries had been women, and those numbers were expected to increase in the future.

72. The Council of Ministers was considering the National Gender Policy, a revision of the Family Code and the Action Plan on Rural Women, and the Land Law already guaranteed rural women's access to and control of land either by acquisition or by inheritance. Rural programmes and projects gave priority to women, in view of their major role in agricultural production and processing and marketing of basic products. Programmes for micro-credit, rural development and poverty reduction, inter alia, provided services in rural communities.

73. Improved obstetric care and universal access to quality services for all pregnant women had reduced the maternal mortality rate to 450 deaths per thousand live births by 2010. The National Obstetric Fistula Treatment Centre was collaborating with UNFPA to prevent and treat obstetric fistula. He appealed to development partners to collaborate in the efforts to eliminate fistula in Angola, and he reiterated his Government's readiness to work in close collaboration with all international organizations for the advancement of women in Angola.

74. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Botswana) said that his Government continued to work towards the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Gender-based violence remained the major impediment to achieving gender equality, and over two thirds of women in Botswana had experienced some form of such violence. The Women's Affairs Department had launched a study in March 2012 to address gender-based violence and assess the response of the criminal justice system and health and other social services. The report would provide recommendations on effective prevention and response strategies.

75. The National Policy on Gender and Development would be submitted to Parliament in November 2012. The Government recognized that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women would have to be incorporated into national legislation in order to strengthen the legal framework for the promotion and protection of women's rights.

76. Botswana continued to be guided by the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and other relevant conventions. The Government had launched its first anti-trafficking

awareness campaign in partnership with UNICEF and was working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to draft legislation and train officials. Despite the significant progress made, critical challenges remained and international cooperation and coordination of efforts at all levels was crucial. Gender equality and the empowerment of women should be an integral component of the development framework beyond 2015.

77. **Mr. Khammoungkhoun** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his Government had made significant progress with regard to gender equality, which was an important element of the national development. The ratio of girls to boys in primary education had reached 91.7 to 100 and continued to rise. Women accounted for over one quarter of members of the National Assembly, including the President, and over 40 per cent of all civil servants. The Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women was the coordinating mechanism for gender issues and played a significant role in promoting gender equality. The Commission's nationwide network ensured that gender issues were mainstreamed in all sectors.

78. The second National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (2011-2015) had four pillars of action: ensuring the legitimate rights of Lao women in all areas; improving national policy and strategy on women's issues; improving the organizational structure for women; and promoting public awareness and social participation. The Lao Government and people had primary responsibility for implementing the Strategy, but would require further international support and cooperation to ensure its success and to meet all internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

79. **Mr. Ulibarri** (Costa Rica) said that gender equality and the empowerment of women were both human rights imperatives and necessary conditions for development, as women who achieved economic empowerment would reinvest their gains in their children, families and communities. Rural and, especially, indigenous women were in possession of important knowledge that could help enhance food security, stop environmental degradation and contribute to sustainable development. As leaders, women brought a vision of equity and sustainability to development policies.

80. His country's strategy included encouraging women and men to share responsibility for caring for children, the sick and older adults. Costa Rican women had achieved representation of almost 40 per cent in parliament and held the majority of municipal council posts. Affirmative measures were important to strengthen women's leadership, and electoral legislation had been revised to include the parity principle for elected office.

81. His delegation's efforts in the sixty-seventh session had focused on achieving a robust text on the topic of violence against women that could guide future discussions. In March 2012, in the context of International Women's Day, the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly had expressed its support for the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women". His delegation supported the initiatives on the eradication of obstetric fistula and female genital mutilation that would soon be submitted by the African Union. He reaffirmed Costa Rica's commitment to working with the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and called for universal ratification of the Convention. The Committee's interaction with other stakeholders, including national human rights institutions, the Commission on the Status of Women and UN-Women were also very important.

82. **Ms. Msechu** (Tanzania) said that his Government had made gender equality and the empowerment of women a priority, as a basic human right and as a social and economic imperative. Educated and empowered women contributed to more productive economies and more peaceful societies, and women's involvement in conflict resolution led to a more sustainable peace. The Government had mainstreamed gender equality objectives in all government policies and programmes, including national strategies for growth and poverty reduction.

83. Tanzania was reforming its legislation, including the 1971 Marriage Act and inheritance laws, to eliminate all gender-based discrimination, and the National Assembly had passed a law to protect children from torture and degrading treatment. As part of its efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation, Tanzania continued to enforce existing legislation and to punish perpetrators through the Penal Code on Sexual Offences.

84. In view of the lack of access to health centres with qualified and experienced midwives, the Government was continuing to expand coverage of primary health facilities and strengthen the provision of comprehensive and basic emergency obstetric and neonatal care nationwide. He urged the international community and the private sector to combine their efforts and funding in that area.

85. **Ms. Kasese-Bota** (Zambia) said that Zambia's National Gender Policy had contributed to reducing gender disparities and improving the status of women and girls. The Ministry of Gender and Child Development, established in 2011, prioritized the advancement of women and their involvement in decision-making at the highest level on matters pertaining to gender equality and children. The Anti-Gender-Based Violence Act prohibited all forms of violence against women and girls and provided for comprehensive care for survivors of violence and sexual assault. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act prohibited trafficking in persons and provided for holistic services to reintegrate trafficking victims, while related legislation would be amended to strengthen the protection of women and girls. Special attention was paid to universal access to health care services, including family and maternal health. The Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health provided integrated health and other social protection services for women and girls.

86. The Government had recently appointed women to key strategic positions, including the Chief and Deputy Chief Justice, the Inspector General of Police and the Director General of the Anti-Corruption Commission. However, women continued to lag behind in the areas of decision-making, political participation and access to productive resources in both rural and urban areas. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate was 16 per cent for women, compared to 12 per cent for men, and women's continued marginalization perpetuated their vulnerability. Her Government therefore prioritized the incorporation of human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, into domestic legislation and had conducted a mapping exercise for that Convention in the context of legal and policy reforms. Gender had been mainstreamed in the planning and budgeting processes for all sectors.

87. The Millennium Development Goals could not be achieved if women continued to suffer physical, social and economic inequalities. With a view to the global development agenda beyond 2015, the international community should build on the global mandate of UN-Women to provide a gender equity programme and kick-start sustainable development goals, while enhancing synergies within United Nations programmes and decision-making processes. In conclusion, she reiterated her Government's commitment to the advancement of women and the exercise of their rights.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

88. **Ms. Zaslansky** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that she could easily discredit each and every one of the baseless accusations made against Israel in the course of the day's discussions. It was strange to hear the observer for Palestine discuss the situation in Gaza without even once mentioning Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist organization which was committed to Israel's destruction and had violently seized control of Gaza in 2007. In addition to firing tens of thousands of rockets at the Israeli civilian population and murdering hundreds of Israeli women, Hamas subjugated Palestinian women as a matter of policy. In Gaza, divorced women who remarried lost custody of their children, and women were not allowed to sing in public, ride bicycles or walk in the street with any man other than their husband. The so-called "morality police" arrested and inflicted beatings on women for such infractions as dressing immodestly.

89. Honour killings were on the increase in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. According to a 2011 survey by the Palestinian Authority, 30 per cent of all Palestinian married women, and over 50 per cent in the Gaza Strip, experienced domestic violence in their lifetime. That was the reality of Hamas in Gaza, yet Palestinian representatives never referred to the true issues of oppression. If the Palestinians were genuinely interested in improving the situation of women, they would not ignore the factors exacerbating their plight. It was clearly easier to blame Israel than to deal with the real issues.

90. She had been surprised to hear the Syrian representative expressing concern for women in the Golan Heights. Surely the Committee would have been much more interested to hear about the situation of women in Homs, Hama and Damascus.

91. **Mr. Jawhara** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the representative of the occupying authority, Israel, was clearly in an unenviable position following the wave of condemnations and denunciations of racist Israeli policy by his own and other delegations. The Israeli delegation was therefore attempting to distort what was happening Syria in order to distract attention from Israeli practices. The Israeli occupying forces continued to perpetrate all kinds of crime, including violence against women, in the occupied Arab territories in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. The representative of such a terrorist entity should not lecture or make blind accusations at a time when Israel continued to perpetrate all kinds of acts of violence against Palestinian women and girls in the occupied Palestinian territories, where Israeli practices prevented many women from reaching hospital in time to give birth.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.